DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 106 CE 050 594

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TITLE Present Issues and Interests on the Study of the History of Adult Education in Japan.
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on the History of Adult Education (1st, Oxford, England, July 14-17, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; *Adult Education; Comparative Education; *Definitions; Developed Nations; *Educational History; *Educational Philosophy; Educational Policy; *Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); *Government Role; High School Equivalency Programs; Nonformal Education; Policy Formation; Postsecondary Education; Public Policy
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

Issues being discussed at present among historians of adult education in Japan include the following: (1) the concept of adult education; (2) the periodical demarcation of the history of adult education; and (3) by whom adult education has been organized up to the present and should be in the future. Scholars debate the concept of adult education, trying to determine a definition and parameters. Some think that the term "adult education" should be used, whereas others prefer "social education" and/or "self-directed learning." In terms of historical periods of adult education in Japan, some historians group it from the point of view of the development process of the law and regulation system, others from the point of view of political and economic policies of the central government, still others from the point of view of the development process of people's self-consciousness of their right to education, and a fourth group, from the point of view of the development process of adult education activities as a whole, both official and nonofficial. The periods before and after World War I and II also serve as demarcation points for some historians. Finally, historians discuss whether adult education has been mainly self-organized or directed by the government, with many believing that self-directed learning is to be preferred, with the government providing support but not regulation. (KC)

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ED297106

International Conference on the History of Adult Education

14 - 17th July 1986 in United Kingdom

Present Issues and Interests on the Study of the HIstory of Adult Education in Japan

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

In the last ten years we have got several interesting and stimulating works on the history of adult education.

Some of them are written as "general history"* but others have some special points of view. One of them is a book collected essays on the methods of researching local history of adult learning activities** and another is written from the point of view of "self-education"***.

This paper shows some present issues and interests beeing discussed among historians of adult educaton in Jpan.

The first is on concept of adult education.

The second is on periodical demarcation.

And the third is ; by whom adult education has been organised up to the present and should be after this.

I would address myself how important these problems are for us.

* National Institute of EDucation :Modern History of Education in Japan ,1974.

** Tsudaka,M.(Ed.): Studies on Local History of Adult Educaton,1981.

*** Fujita,H.(Ed.): History of Adult Education in Japan,1984.

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I. Concept of Adult Education

1. "Adult Education" or "Social Education"

In Japan we have a law to promote the development of people's learning activities named " Social Educaton Law ".* And many people use the word "social education" in the sense of learning activities of adults in the society, for many kinds and a large number of learning activities are organised there.

(* enacted in 1949)

And sometimes out-of-school education for children and youth is included in "social educaton" activities.

On the other hand, we have an academic society of adult education study named "The Japan Society for the Study of Adult Education" founded in 1949. Many researchers think the word "adult education" is better to show the real nature of people's independent learning activities. Because the word "adult" shows an independent human being and people can image free and independent learning activities by the word "adult education".

There is a complicated historical background. These words have special meanings in the context of Japanese modern history.

Before the world war II , in Japan education was merely indoctorination. Education activities for adults organised by the centralor the local government were for control and dominationof people.

In the Meiji era there were many kinds of learning activities, but some were prohibited and others were supported under the control of the government. For example, learning groups organised by young people, who were fighting for establishment of the liberal and democratic government, were oppressed and vanished by the Meiji government. At the same time, a large number of education activities for adults and out-of-school education activities for children were organised by school teachers or voluntary leaders , which were supported and directed by the central government. These were called "popular educaton" and organised to indoctorination and control of Japanese people.

In the Taisho era the government directly organised popular education for control of the people and prohibited any learning activities against the government. In the former era, the word "social" was avoided by the government , because the word reminded " socialism", but at the time circumstances were changed by the world war I. The government established the department of social education in the Ministry of Education and positively organised "social education" to control and indoctorinate the people's consciousness, some of which were called " adult education".

Though free and independent learning activities were strictly restricted, not so few people organised their own learning groups or institutes in many places. "Free University" (established in 1921, Nagano prefecture), "Workers'School "(in 1921, Tokyo)," Farmers' School (in 1921, Niigata), and other learning activities were organised and spreaded to many places.

These movements were oppressed by the governmentin afew years, but they were the first real independent learning activities.

We can find the real nature of adult education in these movements.

Needless to say, education is not indoctorination. Education is to assist, encourage, help and guide to organise self-learning activities. Especially, in the case of adult education, freedom and independency are necessary to last and develop its activities.

It is very difficult to decide which is better to use "adult educaton" or "social education". But it is clear that " self-learning activity" or "self- directed learning " is the core of learning and education of adults.

To describe the history of adult education in Japan, it is very important problem to choose which word. In many cases, "social education " includes all kinds of educaton activities organised by people themselves or not. However, "adult education " does not always show self-directed learning.

I think it is the most reasonable to describe the facts what kind of

learning activities were organised, by whom they were developed and how people began to have the self-consciousness of necessity of learning and right to education. Through these facts we can find how self-directed learning activities had and have been organised . As the result of it, we can describe the history of vivid process and real nature of people's independent learning activities.

2. "Adult Education" or "Self-education"

Next we have a problem which is better to use the word "Adult Education" or " Self- education". Of course we attempt to describe organising process of people's independent learning activities. But it is necessary to discribe all kinds of learning and education activities as the historical facts. Sometimes laws and regulations brought some kinds of vivid learnig activities of adults, and sometimes they oppressed other kinds of people's activities. we can not exclude any kind of learning activities from our history,even if they were not organised by people themselves. In our history all kinds of learning activities should be described. Through it we can show the vivid process of people's independent learning activities , it need not to use the word "self-education" instead of "adult education".

Some people insist to use th word "self-education", because this word does show real nature of people's independent activities.

Needles to say, it is necessary to express the fact of self-education by the word "self-education", but it is impossible to use the word to describe all learning activities and to try to describe the history excepting non-independent activities.

According to the real nature of education, self-education does not merely mean self-learning. It includes to find what to learn, how to laern, how to organise learning activities and how to arrange good conditions by oneself.

Indeed, in the history of people's self-education movements, they not only organised their independent learning activities, but also established some institutes and proposed to improve unreasonable education system.

Self-education activities support people's efforts to create independent human beings, who not only educate themselves but also try to establish equal opportunities and right to education for all people.

It is no matter whether we use the word "self-education" or not.

In the light of "self-education", we can image the future of independent adult education activities.

So, I think, it is benefitable to describe the modern history of adult education in Japan tracing along the footsteps of people's independent learning activities.

*"Social Education Law" was enacted in 1949, founded on "fundemental Law of Education" (1947).

It has an important article which shows nature of adult education;

ARTICLE III. The State and local public bodies shall assist in maintaining a congenial enviroment in which it is possible for individual citizens to engage at sundry times and places in cultural and educational activities, which will assist them in daily living, by providing various kinds of facilities, sponcering meeting, and making available information materials necessary for social education in accordance with the prescriptons of this Law and other laws and regulatons.

Ⅱ. Periodical Demarcation

Our interest on the periodical demarcation is to decide what is the most important element.

Before the world war Ⅱ,the policy of the government had the power to characterise the periods -- Meiji, Taisho and Showa era, but after the war, the extensive development of learning activities of the people shows the most striking features of the period.

Some people devide the history into two parts — before the war Ⅱ and after that. They say that before the war there were government-directed adult education activities, some of them were directly organised by the government and others were strictly restricted under the control of the government. After the war,under the New Constitution, not only school-education but also adult education were changed into democratic style.

Then we were liberated for the first time from allrestrictions which dominated us in mind and body, and could have free and independent learning activities.

But in a few years, government-directed adult education became dominant all over the country.

It is very difficult to describe the complicated history of adult education by the dichotomy —— before and after the war. It is too simple to clear the characteristics of each era , and to show the process of development of it, especially the real power of people's independent learning activities.

Indeed, before and during the war Ⅱ, we had no conditions to create any independent educational activities. But we can find that not so few people endeavered to organise some independent learning activities, as I mentioned, under the strict control and oppression of speech and press.

These are the sources of free and independent learning activities of adults of our own time.

Other people show their own points of view. Four of them are shown below.

(1) From the point of view of development process of law and regulation system

(2) From the point of view of political and economical policies of central government

(3) From the point of view of development process of poeple's self-consciousness of right to education

(4) From the point of view of development process of adult education activities as a whole, both official and non-official.

It is impossible to say what point of view is the best to demarcate the periods. But, to describe the history according to the nature of education, it is necessary to pay attention to the point of view (3).

However, in this case we have aproblem to describe systematically various kinds of historical facts. If we don't pay any attention to people's self- consciousness of right to education, our history would be filled with merely flat and uninteresting facts.

Those who describe the history of adult education from the point of view (1), try to trace the process of formation and amendment of laws and regulations. At the same time they pay attention to changing process of central and local administration. If they analyze the formaton process of people's independent learning activities and their self-consciousness in connection with laws and regulations, this point of view would be very benefitable. About the point of view (2), things are similar, I think.

Taking all in all, it is necessary to pay attenton to people's self-consciousness and independent learning activities in all cases.

I would like to show an example below.

It shows that the most important way to describe the history of adult education is to observe complicated relation between the state and the people.

National Institute of Education issued a big volume of "Modern History of Education in Japan" in 1974. In the eith volume professor Yoshida showed an attempt to devide the modern adult education history into five periods, which was based on the point of view (4). In this volume he and his colleague described the developing process of people's independent learning activities in connection with educational policies and its social background. Reading through it, we can see the developing process of people's self-consciousness of right to education, which was formed through their efforts to organise their learning activities, to last and develop it and to fight against the oppression and control by the government.

This shows us it is the most important to describe history with the poit of view of " development process of people's self-consciousness".

It is possible to say that the history of adult education after the world war Ⅱ, has been the history of formation of independent learning activities. And it is worthy of special mention that these activities has been supported and developed under the legislation of Fundemental Law of Education. Social Education Law has encouraged, supported and organised a large number of learning groups and bodies all over the country.

Though the government had changed its policy until all local governments have had their own democratic plans for adult education activities, many people and local bodies have been endeavered to establish democratic regulations of local governments, to organise free and independent learning activities and to build institutes and halls.

III By Whom Adult Education is Organised

In the study on the local history of adult education, we can trace the footsteps of people's independent learning activities in detail.

We have tried to find organisers and carriers of adult learning activities immediately after the war II. When they were trying to reconstruct and democratise their tarditional young men's associations or to organise some new learning groups, they happened to meet the the first government circular on establishment of people's hall (Kominkan) issued in 1946.

Many young people were encouraged by it, because they were hoping to create new human relations , not tarditional but democratic. For the purpose of it, it was necessary to get some public places to come together, to have meetings and to have learning oppotunities for democratisation of their communities.

In this sense, the circular was the most suitable to their wishes.

Under the influence of the circular, many local bodies had regulations of adult learning activities, which bore a large number of independent learning activities of people, and people developed and improved the regulations in their own towns and villages.

Until Social Education Law was enacted, a large number of people's halls had been built in many places, so to speak, all over the country.*

Now, it is a controvercial issue that " By Whom Adult Education is Organised ".

Some people assist that the government did provide necessary conditions for development of adult education, and unless its help, it was very difficult to bring up many learning activities and make many oppotunities to learnand to have meetings to improve themselves.

However, unless people's wishes and efforts to improve themselves, nothing was occured, nothing was organised and any learning activities were not developed.

" Who Organise Adult Education ? —— government ? or people ? "

It is a silly question, I think.

Those who organise adult education and develop it, is those who try to create independent and self-directed learning activities by themselves.

Though we have a very short history of adult education and have a very little property of independent learning activities, we are convinced that people's consciousness of self-improvement and right to education have been raised up to higher level.

During about forty years after the war, Japanese people have developed themselves up to "master" of their own learning activities.

They have developed their own wishes to learn, their abilities to organise learning groups and to improve some regulations of their cities, towns and villages.

Things have been completely changed compared to those before the war, but, now we face to a new education policy of the central government, named " Lifelong Learning Policy ".

Of course, lifelong learning is necessary for all people at our time, but it should be organised by people themselves.

The official report of the committee of education reform says that a new co-operative system connecting the central or local governments and private enterprises should established to provide various kinds of learning oppotunities.

It is true that a large number of learning oppotunities should be prepared for the people. But, if they are offered for the purpose of development of people's independent learning activities, they should be planned, organised and provided with participation of people, as learners, and at the same time, as a master of their own learning activities.

Participation, autonomy and creation by people themselves are essential elements of development of adult education.

Footsteps of people's independent learning activities show this principle.

* Shimada, S ; Freedom and Autonomy of Adult Education, 1985.